



# News Release

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Contacts:     Donn Moyer, Communications Office  
                  Allison Cook, Communication Office

360-236-4076  
360-236-4022

## **Whooping cough cases at state wrestling tournament — other cases likely**

*State and local health officials investigating*

**OLYMPIA** — At least 15 people with whooping cough (pertussis) attended the 2009 Mat Classic — the state high school wrestling championships held at the Tacoma Dome. The cases were among wrestlers, coaching staff, and spectators at the event February 20-21 — showing the importance of vaccination against whooping cough and other preventable diseases.

The whooping cough cases associated with the tournament are from Kittitas and Pacific Counties. People from all over the state attended the event — attendance has been estimated at 30,000. Pertussis is common in our state — over the past decade, an average 600 cases have been reported each year. There are currently other whooping cough cases in the state that aren't associated with the tournament.

The state Department of Health is working with local health agencies, school nurses, and the [Washington Interscholastic Activities Association \(WIAA\)](http://www.wiaa.com) (www.wiaa.com) to notify attendees that they may have been exposed to whooping cough.

[Pertussis](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/pertussis.htm>) is highly contagious and spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. Initial symptoms are similar to the common cold — sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever, and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough may become severe and can develop into coughing spells followed by a high-pitched whoop. An infected person can spread the disease from the beginning of the cold-like symptoms to three weeks after the coughing episodes start. Antibiotics can reduce the contagious period.

Anyone who attended the tournament and now has cold symptoms and a cough, or is in close contact with someone who has whooping cough, should contact a health care provider. You may be asked to wear a mask in the doctor's office to help prevent spreading the disease. People who

have or may have pertussis should stay away from babies, young children, and pregnant women until treated.

The best way to prevent pertussis is to be properly vaccinated. Whooping cough vaccines are recommended for children and adults. Teens and adults often get a milder form of whooping cough, but can spread the disease to babies and young children who may not be fully protected, and are at greater risk of serious complications. Children should get five vaccinations between two months of age and when they start school. A whooping cough booster shot is now available and recommended for people 11-64.

For information on preventing whooping cough contact your [local health agency](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm)) or the Department of Health's [Immunization Program](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize)) at 360-236-3595. More information on [pertussis is available online](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/diseases/pertussis](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/diseases/pertussis)).

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